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The Supreme Court decision of 1954 represented a culmination of trends -- political, social, and religious. In addition to the legal background and controversy over segregation, many other forces and factors contributed to the move toward eliminating discrimination. The sciences, both natural and social, have helped to undermine the old concepts concerning race. The improvement in the cultural and educational level of the American Negro has resulted in a deepening awareness of rights and a greater pride in race. The fact that the United States has become a world power, along with the threat of Communism, has also contributed to a greater color consciousness.

Finally, the message of the church has been a major factor in changing the racial pattern. As Christians, church members have as a first responsibility to accept the Supreme Court decision as the law of the land. They should attempt to create an atmosphere that will make it possible for officials to comply with the law, and they should recognize the serious difficulties faced by many communities. Integration is a Christian problem, and churches should be faithful in proclaiming the principles that apply to the problem.

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"INTEGRATION"

T. B. MASTON

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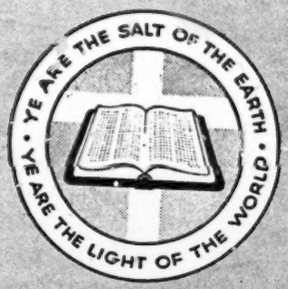

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"INTEGRATION"*

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The word "integration" as used by many people is unfor-
nate. The elimination of legal segregation in the public
hools and elsewhere would not necessarily mean integra-
on in the sense that many are using the word. They are
inking of it as complete integration and some even of
nalgamation. They should remember, however, that even
a non-segregated society, such as we have in certain
ctions of the United States and in other countries, there
ntinues to be considerable separation of races. However,
r those of the minority group there is a vast difference
etween segregation and separation. The former is
aintained by force—legal or social; the latter is voluntary.
he former carries the stigma of inferiority; the latter
ay be maintained, to a degree, by the minority group with-
ut any loss of a sense of equality.

This whole question became acute for many of us when
n May 17, 1954 the Supreme Court of the United States
ecreed that segregation in public schools was contrary to
ur constitution. After reviewing the cases carried to the
ourt from Kansas, South Carolina, Virginia, and Delaware,
he Court, in its written opinion, asked the following ques-
on: "Does segregation of children in public schools solely
n the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and
ther 'tangible' factors may be equal, deprive the children of

*This paper was prepared in response to a request by the Advi-
ory Council of Southern Baptists for Work with Negroes, and was
resented to the group in its regular annual meeting in Nashville,
Iarch 6, 1956.

Bennett O. Stalvey

the minority group of equal educational opportunities?" The answer was, "We believe that it does." After specifying some of the ways segregation deprived the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities, the Court concluded "that in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." If further declared that those who were segregated were "deprived of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment."

The Supreme Court recognized the seriousness of the decision and wisely did not make provision for its immediate implementation. It was a year later, May 31, 1955, that the Court ruled that a "prompt and reasonable start toward full compliance" would have to be made. Time was allowed for such compliance but the Court insisted that such time be "consistent with good faith." Some communities in the South and elsewhere have already complied fully, others are attempting to work out a plan to comply, while there are still other communities including some states that are seeking ways to evade, circumvent, or nullify the decision of the Court. If they cannot do this they are planning to delay compliance as long as possible. This struggle over the Supreme Court decision is not only a social and political struggle but a moral and spiritual one of major proportions. We are all involved in some way and to some degree in the turmoil that has arisen over what is being called "integration."

Historic Background

What is the background for this major social revolution? It did not happen in a day. Every change so basic has its roots deep in the past. It cannot be understood fully unless it is understood historically.

The Supreme Court decision merely represented the culmination of trends, political, social, and religious, that had been going on for a long time. It represented another but

not the final step of the Negro down the long, long, and sometimes lonesome road to first class citizenship. It is another stage but not the final one in the complete elimination of legal segregation based on race.

To trace adequately the background of the Supreme Court decision and the social revolution it represented would take us back to slavery days. At the time when the slaves were freed, as the Court itself suggested, "the movement toward free common schools, supported by general taxation, had not yet taken hold." Education even of white children was largely in private schools. This means that any light concerning the racial pattern of the times must come from sources other than the public schools.

We do know that previous to the freeing of the slaves many of them were members of the churches with the white people, and in many of the Baptist and Methodist churches the slaves sat indiscriminately among the white people until the Nat Turner rebellion.[1] Incidentally, one Baptist church in Charleston, South Carolina, had 400 Negro members by 1804, while the First Baptist Church of Montgomery, Alabama, in 1865 had 600 Negro members to 300 white.[2] When the Southern Baptist Convention was organized in 1845 one report suggests that there were more Negro members than white in proportion to the population.[3] The same source says that in 1853 in Virginia there were 45,000 Negro and 50,000 white members in the Baptist churches of the state.

There took place, however, in the churches and elsewhere a rather rapid separation following the freeing of the slaves and during the reconstruction days. There had been some

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[1]Bertram Wilbur Doyle, *The Etiquette of Race Relations in the South* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1937), p. 37.

[2]Walter L. Fleming, *Documentary History of Reconstruction* (reprinted; New York: Peter Smith, 1950), I, 244.

[3]Doyle, *op. cit.*, p. 37

separate churches from early days, but a general separation began during the war between the states, with separate churches and meeting houses springing up everywhere by 1863.[4] This was a trend that was approved by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1867 since it promised, so it was claimed, to increase the efficiency of the Negro churches.[5]

Following Amendment XIII of the Constitution, which freed the slaves, came Amendments XIV and XV, which in the main sought to implement Amendment XIII and to assure the former slaves full citzenship rights. It is Article or Amendment XIV which has figured particularly prominently in recent arguments, legal and otherwise, concerning segregation. Section 1, which is the pertinent portion of the article, reads as follows:

> All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and the state wherein they reside. No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citzens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

Recently some complaint has been heard that this amendment and the others of the Civil War period were passed without the consent or approval of the people of the South. But really is that the major question or problem? The main questions are: Were and are these amendments in harmony with the spirit and purpose of our democratic way of life? Do they conform to the principles enunciated in the Preamble to the Constitution and to the spirit of the Constitution itself? The Preamble or introductory paragraph of the Constitution reads as follows:

> We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare,

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[4]*Ibid.*, p. 45

[5]Southern Baptist Convention, *Annual* 1867, p. 49.

and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

Incidentally, there was no immediate attempt in the South to comply with the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments. The Negro's citizenship rights were limited in many ways. By the use of the grandfather clause, by educational tests and by other strategies, he was deprived of rights guaranteed to him by the Constitution. It is possible that some limitations of full citizenship rights may be justified for a period of time if the bases for the limitations are applied consistently and if there is an honest effort to remove the occasions for the limitations. Neither of these things was done, on any large or general scale, in regard to the Negro.

The story is told of a Negro, graduate of Harvard, to whom the educational test for voting was applied in one of our Southern states. He was handed a copy of the Constitution which he read and interpreted readily. He even read some Latin and Greek for the election official. Finally in desperation the official handed him a Chinese laundry slip and said, "Drat you, what does this mean?" The Negro replied, "It means that you are not going to let me vote."

In the area of education, transportation, and elsewhere there developed the theory of separate but equal, which really meant in practice separate but unequal. The "separate but equal" doctrine did not make its appearance in the Supreme Court until 1896, in a case that involved transportation rather than education. "American courts have since labored with the doctrine for over half a century." Six cases, involving the separate but equal doctrine as applied to education, were passed on by the Supreme Court previous to May of 1954. A passing acquaintance with those cases would reveal a gradual breaking down of the separate but equal theory. The action of the Court in May, 1954, was the

natural, the almost inevitable climax of preceding decisions. The validity of the separate but equal doctrine, which was a part of the whole caste structure, started to crumble when the courts in the 1930's and particularly the Supreme Court began to give preferential treatment to civil rights rather than to property rights.[6]

The entire controversy in recent years regarding civil rights has provided some of the background for the Supreme Court decision and the elimination of legal segregation. The Civil Rights Committee, appointed by President Truman, recommended in its report of 1947 "the elimination of segregation, based on race, color, creed, or national origin, from American life." It further added that the separate but equal doctrine had failed.

Contributing Factors

In addition to the background factors mentioned previously, what are some additional forces and factors that have contributed to the move toward the elimination of legal segregation?

1. *The sciences, natural and social,* have helped to undermine the old concepts concerning race and the consequent pattern of race relations. For example, Ruth Benedict, an anthropologist, and Gene Weltfish[7] say: "The Bible story of Adam and Eve, father and mother of the whole human race, told centuries ago the same truth that science has shown today: that all the peoples of the earth are a single family and have a common origin." The psychologists have told us, and produced evidence as proof, that races are not innately superior or inferior. They have also helped us to understand the sources and nature of racial prejudice. Sociologists have

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[6]Morroe Berger, *Equality by Statute* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), p. 72.

[7]*The Races of Mankind.* Public Affairs Pamphlet, No. 85, p. 5.

greatly increased our knowledge of the Negro and other races and have given us a clearer insight into racial conflicts and problems. The contributions of Myrdal, the Swedish sociologist who was brought to the United States to direct an objective study of the Negro, and his associates such as Klineberg, Johnson and others cannot be measured in tangible ways but they have certainly influenced the thinking of the American people concerning the Negro problem which Myrdal aptly called *An American Dilemma.*

2. Another factor of considerable importance in the changing racial pattern has been *the marked improvement in the cultural and educational level of the American Negro.* As their educational status has improved they have become more and more vocal about their grievances and more militant in their demands that they become first class citizens. Along with this educational and cultural advance, and to a considerable degree a result of it, there has developed a deepening consciousness of race and a greater pride in their race. They can point with pride to a Jackie Robinson in sports, a Marian Anderson in music, a Countee Cullen in literature, a Charles S. Johnson in education, a Ralph Bunche in government service, and many, many others in various fields of human endeavor.

3. *The fact that the United States has become a world power,* a member of United Nations, and has a sense of world responsibility, has contributed in various ways to the new racial situation. The struggle between the United States and the West on one side and the Soviet Union and communism on the other is for the minds and souls of men. Many of those men, possibly as many as four out of five in the world, have colored skins. What we do about the men of color in our midst may determine to a considerable degree what we shall be able to do for and with the colored peoples of the world. And these colored peoples may determine the destiny of our civilization and of our world.

4. *Communism* has helped to make us color conscious. The limitations of the citizenship rights of our largest minority group has been a weak spot in our democratic profession. Communism has taken advantage of this weakness. This in turn has made us more conscious of the weakness and has strengthened our conviction that something must be done about it.

5. Another factor of major significance is the fact that the world is in the midst of a major crisis and that the *march of the masses* is a characteristic of and a factor in that crisis. The colored peoples of the world, in the main, including the colored of the United States, are moving with those marching masses. They are searching for food, for freedom, for respect or dignity, and for a sense of purpose. As Frank Laubach and others have suggested, this movement of the masses is inevitable and irresistible.[8]

6. We must also admit that *the labor unions* have contributed considerably to the changing of the racial pattern in the South. Sometimes they have put our churches to shame in their treatment of those of other races.

7. However, *the message of the churches* has been a major factor in the changing racial pattern. Their message has created a continuing tension within the church, between the church and the world, and even within the heart and life of serious-minded Christian people. Such tension between the Christian ideal on the one hand and the very imperfect embodiment of that ideal in the world and even within the Christian fellowship is necessary if real progress is to be made toward the realization of the ideal.

Possibly a concluding word should be said about the increasing importance of public school education and the ef-

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[8]Frank C. Laubach, *Wake Up or Blow Up* (Westwood, N. J.: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1951).

fect of this increased importance on the decision of the Supreme Court. The Court itself recognized this as a factor in its decision. In contrast to earlier days when there was little public school education the Court agreed that "today, education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments. . . . It is the very foundation of good citizenship. . . . In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms."

Current Reactions

Many of the reactions to the Court decision and other developments since then have been violent and radical. It has been difficult in much of the South, even within religious circles, to maintain a balanced position and an atmosphere favorable to a cool, objective approach. We are not going to consider the extreme reactions for or against the order to desegregate. We want to concentrate on what *should* be our reactions and the reactions of Christians in general.

1. *We should accept the Supreme Court decision as the law of the land.* We may have regretted the decision. We may have wished that the change could have been brought about in a more gradual way, without legal action or pressure. However, the Court has spoken and the Court represents constituted authority. As Christians we believe that the powers that be are ordained of God and that we are to be law-abiding citizens. We should not be a party to any movement or group that would break down respect for constituted authority or for those who exercise that authority. Furthermore, we should acknowledge that the Supreme Court could not have decided otherwise if it was going to conform to the Constitution. Also, we should admit that the decision is in harmony with our democratic concepts and with the principles of the Christian religion.

2. As law-abiding citizens, *Christians should also attempt to create an atmosphere that would make it possible for school boards and school administrators to comply with the instructions of the Supreme Court.* We should also be defenders of our public schools, refusing to be a party to their destruction or liquidation.

3. On the other hand, *we should recognize the serious difficulties faced by many communities* and by the leaders of those communities. The greater the proportion of the population that is Negro, the more difficult it will be, ordinarily, for the schools to comply with the Supreme Court decision. To push so-called integration too rapidly in some communities of the South might conceivably create problems just as serious as those it purports to solve. It should also be remembered that real integration involves more than the mere presence of children of the two races in the same school. It might be cruel to a child to admit him to a school unless he was really accepted by the children and the teachers in that school.

4. The preceding means that *we must be patient with one another* and particularly with those who differ from us. This patience is need on the part of those who are defenders of the segregation pattern and also by those who advocate the elimination of all legal segregation. Some of us who are somewhat at the outskirts or are on the circumference of the problem need to understand that the situation is quite different in Mississippi, Georgia, Alabama, South Carolina, and other sections where they have a so-called black belt. It is no mere accident that the Southern Baptist colleges and universities that have up to this time admitted Negro students are in Arizona, Texas, Oklahoma, Missouri, and Kentucky. It possibly should be added that we should never permit our differences in regard to this issue to become a test of fellowship among us. There is a real danger that this will happen. If we are to avoid this, there must be understand-

ing by those on both sides of the controversy and a genuine Christian spirit on the part of all.

5. While recognizing the difficulty of achieving so-called integration and while agreeing that we must be patient with one another and with what some of us consider very slow progress in certain sections, *yet there should not be any hesitation about agreeing that the contemporary race problem is basically a Christian problem.* We cannot evade our responsibility by saying that it is political and should not be considered from the Christian viewpoint. It belongs within the scope of the Christian program, and there should be general agreement that it will not be worked out right without the application of the Christian spirit and the Christian ethic to it. This means, of course, that that application must be made by all concerned including those of both races. There should be a consistent attempt to keep the channels of communication open between the Christian forces of the white and the Negro races. There is little hope for a constructive solution for the problem without such intercommunication.

6. *There should also be a faithful teaching and proclaiming of basic Christian principles that apply to the problem.* We would insist that all Christians, whatever their position on segregation, should accept the fundamental principles that man is created in the image of God, that Christ died for all men, that all men are of infinite value in the sight of God, and should always be treated as an end and never as a means by his fellow man. There should also be general agreement that God is no respecter of persons, that he is the Father of all those who believe, and that we are brothers and sisters in Christ. The ethic of unselish love, with the Golden Rule a practical expression of such love, should be applied to the area of race as well as every other area of life. We cannot escape the plain teachings of the Bible that

every basic principle revealed in it knows no limitation. Also it is plainly taught that these teachings are given for our guidance, they are to be practiced. They provide the basis for the judgment or evaluation of our conduct.

Such a frank recognition of the application of fundamental Christian principles to the area of race relations will maintain a constant and wholesome tension toward the Christian ideal. It may be that some conscientious Christians will defend segregation for the time being. This itself will not do any particular damage so long as they will recognize that the segregation pattern is out of harmony with the spirit and the teachings of the Bible, particularly as revealed in the life and ministry of Jesus. We must insist that an imperfect and an incomplete application of those ideals must never be defended as the final expression of the Christian spirit in human relations.

7. Finally, *our churches and our church related institutions and agencies should face up to the full implications of the Supreme Court decision.* We need to adjust our racial ethic to conform to the Christian message as well as to conform to the Supreme Court decision. We have certainly done this to some degree by the excellent statement made at St. Louis in 1947 and in our approval of the Supreme Court decision by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1954. However, a pronouncement is one thing and its practical application in the local church, community, and in the Baptist fellowship in general is quite another thing. It is acknowledged that in this area we may need to go slowly and carefully, but we do need to recognize that our practice is far below the Christian ideal. There should be a continuing tension within our churches growing out of our failure to accept the full demands of original Christianity with its ethic of the cross. There likewise should be a constant movement toward that Christian ideal in our lives and in the world. The church should truly be the church.

Also, the prophet should be the prophet of God, speaking God's message to the people. He should never be found in the camp of those who seek to make themselves popular with the people by appealing to their prejudices. He should challenge them to respond to the high call of God.